United Nations S/2018/762

Security Council

Distr.: General
8 August 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 7 August 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

Pursuant to the request of the Security Council in paragraph 61 of its resolution 2409 (2018), I have the honour to submit the 30-day update covering the period from 1 to 31 July 2018 on political and technical progress towards the holding of elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 23 December 2018, and obstacles to the implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

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Annex

Update of the Secretary-General on progress in the electoral process and implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 31 July 2018

1. The present update, which covers developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 1 to 31 July 2018, is submitted pursuant to resolution 2409 (2018), in which the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to provide a written update every 30 days on political and technical progress towards the holding of elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 23 December 2018 and on obstacles to the implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement.

I. Key political developments related to the electoral process and implementation of the political agreement

2. During the reporting period, technical preparations by the Independent National Electoral Commission for the presidential, legislative and provincial elections to be held on 23 December dominated the political scene. A major milestone in the electoral calendar was achieved when, on 24 June, the Commission formally invited political parties and groupings to submit their candidatures for provincial legislative elections for the 23 December polls and subsequently opened the centres for the registration and processing of candidates for the submission of candidacies with a deadline of 8 July, which was later extended to 13 July.

3. On 17 July, during the extraordinary parliamentary session convened from 20 June to 19 July, the National Assembly adopted the draft law on the status of former elected heads of State, extending privileges and immunities to other heads of State institutions, including former prime ministers, heads of national security forces and senior court magistrates on the basis of a proposal submitted by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Joseph Kabila. The Senate subsequently adopted a version of the draft law in which it rejected that proposal. The text of the National Assembly prevailed, as the two chambers failed to reach an agreement on a harmonized text of the draft law. The parliamentary session did not, however, consider draft legislation related to the implementation of confidence-building measures, including the draft amendment to the law on public demonstrations of 2015. In addition, despite repeated requests by the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, led by Felix Tshisekedi, Parliament did not resolve the issue of the replacement of the representative of the Union (who also serves as rapporteur) to the Bureau of the Independent National Electoral Commission.

4. On 4 July, four newly appointed members of the Constitutional Court took the oath of office at a ceremony in Kinshasa presided over by President Kabila. On 7 July, at an extraordinary session, the Council of Ministers adopted a decree on the establishment of additional provincial appeals courts in the newly created provinces, which, if put into operation, would strengthen adjudication mechanisms for electoral disputes. Until those additional courts are functioning, complaints will be addressed by the 11 existing courts.

5. On 19 July, the President, in his address on the state of the nation before a joint session of the National Assembly and the Senate, indicated that his commitment to respecting the Constitution remained unequivocal and stressed that the Government, as a matter of national sovereignty and dignity, would assume full responsibility for funding the presidential elections and the national and provincial legislative elections. He also warned against foreign interference in the political and electoral processes

and reiterated the readiness of the Government to preserve the sovereignty and independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

6. Political actors continued to disagree on the use of voting machines, the voter register and the implementation of confidence-building measures. Those disagreements featured prominently on the agenda of the tripartite meeting between the National Council for Monitoring the Agreement and the Electoral Process, the Independent National Electoral Commission and the Government held from 5 to 25 July to evaluate the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016. The main opposition parties, including the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, the Union pour la nation congolaise and the Dynamique de l'opposition, reiterated their call for credible and transparent elections. In a communiqué issued on 18 July, the opposition platform Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie called for the removal of "fictitious" voters from the voter register, the non-use of voting machines, the effective implementation of confidence-building measures, the replacement of the delegate of the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social to the Independent National Electoral Commission, and the non-candidacy of the incumbent President. The Mouvement de libération du Congo, for its part, stated its readiness to take part in the elections without any prerequisites, while rejecting the proposed use of voting machines. Notwithstanding the concerns of the opposition, all major political parties put forward candidates for the provincial legislative elections.

7. The Majorité présidentielle political alliance continued its preparations for the elections in earnest, with the establishment on 1 July of a broad political platform, the Front commun pour le Congo, which brings together the Majorité présidentielle and several opposition parties with representatives in the Government. The signing of the constitutive charter of the Front commun began on 1 July and is open to all political and civil society actors. The stated objective of the Front is to support a single candidate on the basis of a joint programme.

8. On 13 July, the Mouvement de libération du Congo held an extraordinary congress at which it nominated Jean-Pierre Bemba as its presidential candidate for the 23 December 2018 elections. On the same day, the Government reportedly issued Mr. Bemba a diplomatic passport in his capacity as Senator.

9. The Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Comité laïc de coordination continued to denounce the shrinking political space and the lack of tangible progress in the implementation of confidence-building measures. On 7 July, the Comité laïc de coordination issued a statement reiterating calls for the implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement and announcing that nationwide protests would resume in mid-August if there was no clear indication on the holding of timely, credible and transparent elections.

II. Key electoral developments related to the implementation of the political agreement

A. Electoral developments

10. The submission of candidacies for the provincial legislative elections concluded successfully, with constructive consultations between political parties and the Independent National Electoral Commission to address logistical constraints linked to the process. More than 2,000 National Police personnel were deployed to secure the centres for the registration and processing of candidates, which closed on 13 July. Subsequently, as at 18 July, 149 of the 173 offices had transmitted their files to the central data processing centre, where a total of 16,543 candidates were registered. Of

those candidates, 88 per cent are men and 12 per cent are women, with 77 independent candidates, 5,716 from political parties and 10,750 from political groupings competing for a total of 715 seats. In comparison, in 2006 there were 19,000 registered candidates in total, and 24,000 registered in preparation for the 2015 provincial elections, which were later postponed.

11. The new lists of political parties and groupings published in the 7 July issue of the official gazette did not accommodate recommendations contained in the 31 December 2016 political agreement to find a solution to the duplication of political parties. Notably, four political parties remain registered as the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, and two of them are registered under the same address and registration act. Progress also remained limited on the code of conduct for the elections, which by 12 July had been signed by only 257 political parties and groupings (i.e., less than 50 per cent of those registered), none of them major opposition entities.

12. The Independent National Electoral Commission is preparing for the printing and publication of the provisional voter list as required by law and recommended by the International Organization of la Francophonie following its audit of the voter register. The organization recommended that the voter list be published as soon as possible in order to increase transparency. According to the electoral calendar, the printing and publication of the provisional voter list and the settlement of related disputes were to be carried out between 27 May and 22 October.

13. As at 19 July, following the arrival of an initial set of 1,000 voting machines in Kinshasa on 14 June, 861 machines had been received in the provincial capitals for voter education purposes. Some 106,000 voting machines are scheduled to arrive in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in several phases between June and September.

14. According to a statement by the Minister of Finance on 13 July, the Government reportedly disbursed further funds to the Independent National Electoral Commission, raising the overall amount of Government allocations to the Commission to $203 million as at 10 July.

15. The national authorities reaffirmed their position of self-sufficiency in the electoral preparations. Nevertheless, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) continues to respond to requests for support at various levels and to provide technical assistance for the electoral process. At the national level, the United Nations and the Independent National Electoral Commission collaborate, inter alia, in the coordination of the work of the Commission's provincial offices, operational planning and training. United Nations technical support covers 18 Commission antennas in the field. The training of magistrates in the management of electoral disputes, organized by the Supreme Council of Magistrates and the Commission in collaboration with the electoral cycle support project managed by the United Nations Development Programme, started at the provincial level on 18 July, following a training-of-trainers session in Kinshasa from 6 to 11 July. In addition, the Commission held several outreach activities in the provinces on the electoral process and the use of voting machines. While no formal request for logistical support has yet been received, MONUSCO was scheduled to begin providing such assistance on 26 July.

B. Restrictions on political space and violence related to the implementation of the political agreement in the electoral context

16. Restrictions continue to be imposed by the political and administrative authorities and security forces on political activities and demonstrations organized by political

parties and civil society organizations. On 1 July, a member of the Démocratie chrétienne fédéraliste party, founded by the late Nyamwisi Muvingi, was arrested by the military prosecutor in Beni (North Kivu province) when he went to register as a candidate for the provincial elections. He was accused of participating in an alleged insurrectional movement in relation to an armed attack in 2015. On 11 July, the police violently dispersed a protest organized by the Filimbi citizens movement in front of the MONUSCO office in Goma to demand that MONUSCO become involved in the case of five Filimbi activists detained in Kinshasa. Some of the demonstrators sought refuge in the MONUSCO compound, while seven others were arrested by the police and released later the same day. However, several other meetings were held peacefully. For instance, a demonstration organized by women's organizations on 4 July in Lubumbashi (Haut-Katanga province) to denounce the rise of criminality in the city proceeded calmly, and protesters were received by the local authorities.

C. Confidence-building measures

17. Several trials of political opposition figures and members of civil society were held during the period under review. On 27 June, the trial of Moïse Katumbi and associates on charges of attempting to undermine State security, which began with a first hearing at the Supreme Court, was adjourned until 11 October on procedural grounds. Six persons arrested in April and May 2016 remain in unlawful detention in relation to the case.

18. On 29 June, in Kinshasa, the trial of five members of Filimbi on charges of offenses against the President, inciting civil disobedience and distribution of leaflets undermining the national interest began before the tribunal de paix in the municipality of La Gombe. The activists, who were arrested while mobilizing for demonstrations in Kinshasa on 23 and 31 December 2017, were detained and kept incommunicado by intelligence services for five months, without judicial supervision.

19. Appearing before the tripartite meeting on 16 July, the Minister of Justice, Alexis Thambwe, spoke of progress in the implementation of the confidence-building measures set out in the 31 December 2016 political agreement, including the release of 4,109 prisoners. The Minister emphatically ruled out the release of some political figures, however, including Franck Diongo, Eugene Diomi Ndongala and Jean-Claude Muyambo, on the grounds that they were not political prisoners.

III. Good offices efforts for the implementation of the political agreement

20. On 26 June, my Special Representative met the Executive Secretary of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Stergomena Tax, in Gaborone for consultations on the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a view to harmonizing approaches to supporting the political process. The Executive Secretary reiterated the commitment of SADC to supporting the process in close collaboration with MONUSCO. During the reporting period, she also met with key political stakeholders, including the Vice Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Leonard She Okitundu, the Vice-President of the Ensemble pour le changement opposition platform, Pierre Lumbi, the Permanent Secretary of the Political Bureau of Ensemble pour le changement, Christophe Lutundula, the Secretary-General of the Mouvement de libération du Congo, Eve Bazaïba, and former Prime Ministers Augustin Matata Ponyo and Samy Badibanga, as well as with members of the Senate and the National Assembly.

21. Regional and subregional organizations maintained their engagement in the political and electoral process of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. During the thirty-first ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union, held on 1 and 2 July in Nouakchott, the Assembly welcomed the efforts by the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Independent National Electoral Commission, with the support of the African Union Commission, SADC, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Economic Community of Central African States, the United Nations and States members of the African Union, for the holding of elections. In this regard, the Assembly encouraged national stakeholders and others to make necessary compromises, with a view to preserving continuous dialogue and the spirit of consensus, and to cooperate fully with MONUSCO. On 12 July, in Addis Ababa, the African Union Commission held a series of briefings on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

IV. Observations

22. I commend the Independent National Electoral Commission for its adherence to the electoral calendar and encourage all stakeholders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to work towards the full implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement, leading to credible elections and a democratic transfer of power. I call on the national authorities to abide by their commitments to implement the confidence-building measures stipulated in the political agreement and to ensure respect for fundamental freedoms and rights, which are critical to creating an environment conducive to credible and inclusive elections.

23. I also commend the recent engagement between the Independent National Electoral Commission and political parties to address concerns related to the registration of candidates for provincial legislative elections. Such engagement should be encouraged to address other outstanding contentious issues, and it would significantly enhance confidence in the electoral process. In the meantime, I call for constructive engagement between political actors and the Commission to resolve disagreements over voting machines, the voter registry and other contentious issues, with a view to dissipating mistrust.

24. As the Government has assumed full responsibility for funding the elections, it is critical that it maintain adequate and regular disbursements of funds to the Independent National Electoral Commission to ensure that deadlines for the electoral process are met. I encourage the Government, the Commission and political actors to put mitigating measures in place to address actual or potential logistical constraints in relation to the use of voting machines and the registration of candidates.

25. I note with concern the small number of women registered as candidates for the provincial legislative elections. I urge political parties to ensure greater representation of women in the lists of candidates put forward for the forthcoming national elections.

26. During the reporting period, no meaningful progress was made towards the implementation of the confidence-building measures set out in the 31 December 2016 political agreement. Political parties and civil society activists continued to be denied civil and political rights. I am particularly concerned that the ban on public demonstrations is still being implemented across the country, albeit selectively. The repression, arbitrary arrest and lengthy detention of civil society activists by intelligence services, without judicial review, continue to be a matter of concern. Less than six months before the elections, it is critical to ensure that the Government plays an active role in creating a conducive environment where political parties and civil society activists can freely express their political opinions and undertake peaceful activities.

27. I am worried that these concerns, if not adequately addressed, might severely undermine the inclusivity, credibility and acceptance of the electoral process. Failure to conclude the process culminating in a peaceful and democratic transfer of power could have far-reaching implications for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the subregion. It is therefore imperative to accelerate the implementation of confidence-building measures and to ensure that the electoral process is carried out in accordance with the 31 December 2016 political agreement and the Constitution.

28. I am encouraged that, at present, all political parties continue to display a willingness to engage constructively in the political and electoral process, including going to great lengths to register candidates in provincial legislative elections. The international community must continue to support and sustain that engagement.

29. I express my gratitude for the political and technical support, at both the national and provincial levels, provided by regional organizations and the international community, alongside the United Nations, for the organization of the upcoming elections and for the creation of an environment conducive to credible polls. I also reiterate the readiness of MONUSCO to provide logistical support for the electoral process, in line with its mandate, as outlined in Security Council resolution 2409 (2018).

United Nations S/2018/763

Security Council

Distr.: General
10 August 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 8 August 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for 7 and 8 August 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Safronkov**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 8 August 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (7 August 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 12 incidents of gunfire: 7 in Aleppo Governorate and 5 in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported two incidents of gunfire in Idlib Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides has not carried out any humanitarian operations over the past 24 hours.

In total, 1,886 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,880.76 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 10 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (8 August 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported six incidents of gunfire: four in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and two in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported four incidents of gunfire: two in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and two in Hama Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides has carried out two humanitarian operations:

- In Tall al-Dura, Hama Governorate, 650 food parcels with a total weight of 2.8 tons were distributed as humanitarian aid
- In Muzayrib, Dar'a Governorate, 430 food parcels with a total weight of 1.8 tons were distributed as humanitarian aid.

In total, 1,888 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,885.36 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 211 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 87,491 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

United Nations S/2018/764

Security Council

Distr.: General
10 August 2018

Original: English

Identical letters dated 9 August 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to submit herewith a table clarifying the numbers of civilians killed and injured as a result of terrorist attacks, including those involving mortar shells and explosive devices, committed by armed terrorist groups against safe neighbourhoods in different Syrian cities and areas, during the period from 22 June to 21 July 2018.

Governorate	*Total number of civilians killed*	*Number of children killed*	*Total number of civilians injured*	*Number of children injured*
Damascus	–	–	4	1
Rif Dimashq	6	–	11	6
Dar'a	20	3	67	20
Suwayda'	4	1	14	1
Homs	1	–	11	4
Hama	2	2	6	3
Tartus	–	–	–	–
Ladhiqiyah	–	–	–	–
Idlib	1	–	4	–
Aleppo	2	1	22	11
Dayr al-Zawr	2	1	9	8
Hasakah	–	–	–	–
Qunaytirah	3	2	18	3
Raqqah	–	–	–	–
Total	**41**	**10**	**166**	**57**

It would be highly appreciated if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Abdullah **Hallak**
Chargé d'affaires a.i
Minister Counsellor

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United Nations S/2018/765

Security Council

Distr.: General
15 August 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 10 August 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for 9 and 10 August 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Safronkov**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 10 August 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (9 August 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 16 incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: 9 in Aleppo, 6 in Ladhiqiyah, and 1 in Hama.

The Turkish representative office has not reported any incidents of gunfire.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides has carried out one humanitarian operation.

In Tall Rif'at, Aleppo Governorate, 650 food parcels with a total weight of 2.8 tons were distributed as humanitarian aid.

In total, 1,889 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,888.16 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 66 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 87,557 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (10 August 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported five incidents of gunfire: three in Aleppo Governorate and two in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported five incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: three in Hama, one in Idlib and one in Aleppo.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides has carried out two humanitarian operations:

- In Husayniyah, Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, 650 food parcels with a total weight of 2.8 tons were distributed
- In Ard al-Jabburin, Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, 650 food parcels with a total weight of 2.8 tons were distributed.

In total, 1,891 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,893.76 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 102 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 87,659 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

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General Assembly
Security Council

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13 August 2018

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General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Identical letters dated 10 August 2018 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

As conditions continue to deteriorate dangerously, I am compelled to write to you once again to draw your attention to the ongoing critical situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and, more specifically, to the grave reality faced by Palestinian civilians as a direct result of the Israeli military occupation.

On 8 August, throughout the night, Israeli occupying forces carried out indiscriminate air strikes across the besieged Gaza Strip, killing three Palestinians, including a 23-year-old pregnant woman, Inas Khammash, and her 18-month-old toddler, Bayan Khammash, as they were in their home in Dayr al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip. Heavy shelling by Israeli warplanes in various areas in Gaza also resulted in the injury of at least nine other Palestinians. We condemn in the strongest terms these Israeli military attacks on the densely populated Gaza Strip, which are further endangering civilian lives and causing damage and destruction to civilian property, including to a cultural centre that is home to the second largest theatre in Gaza.

The intensification of Israel's aggression against the Gaza Strip threatens to further destabilize the situation on the ground and to fully ignite yet another round of deadly violence, which must be avoided at all costs. Such criminal actions by the occupying Power, including the lethal use of force against unarmed civilian protesters, have exacerbated the already severe protection crisis being endured by our people and risk the further ratcheting up of tensions and the destabilization of the situation, which would clearly further threaten international peace and security.

As we have underscored before, such brutal and criminal campaigns against the civilian population of Gaza and Israel's deliberate targeting and killing of Palestinian children are not new, following instead a pattern of wilful killings of Palestinian civilians, including children, throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, with total impunity. Clearly, Israel's immoral, inhumane and unlawful actions constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, for which the international community must finally and fully hold Israel accountable.

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Israel's ongoing use of lethal force against Palestinian civilians and its cruel and callous disregard for human life were also demonstrated during the Great Return March in Gaza on 3 August, as the occupying Power continued its vicious killing of defenceless peaceful protesters, fatally wounding two Palestinians, 15-year-old Muath Ziad al-Suri and 25-year-old Ahmad Yahiya Atallah Yaghi, and injuring more than 220, including 90 with live ammunition. That brings the total number of Palestinians killed since 30 March to nearly 160, including 23 children, and the total number of injured persons to approximately 15,500.

We recall that Palestinian civilians in Gaza are protesting against the unbearable conditions that the Palestinian people have been facing for the past 70 years, including 70 years of dispossession, a 51-year occupation and more than 11 years of an illegal blockade in Gaza, whereby 2 million civilians — including children, women, men, older persons and sick persons — are trapped in an inhumane situation that affects every single aspect of life. As even more suffering is being inflicted on this vulnerable and besieged population, hopes are further diminishing, and this loss of hope is especially prevalent among our youth.

Against this backdrop of criminal activity in Gaza, the occupying Power also continues its endless provocations and illegal actions against the Palestinian people and their holy sites in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, further fuelling already high tensions and continuing to destabilize the fragile situation on the ground.

In this regard, on 8 August, Israeli occupying forces shut down the Ibrahimi mosque in Al-Khalil (Hebron) for a period of 24 hours, preventing Palestinian worshippers from entering to worship and banning the Muslim call to prayer, in violation of international law, including the right to freedom of worship and religion, while allowing only Jewish visitors into the Muslim site.

As long as the world remains silent in the face of these flagrant violations, Israel's brutal colonial and discriminatory project against innocent Palestinians will only continue. The killing and injury of Palestinian men, women and children under Israeli occupation, such as the tragic crimes detailed above, must be addressed. We cannot accept, nor should the international community accept, that a people under occupation for more than five decades be left defenceless, denied the protections of international law, including humanitarian law and human rights law, while the occupying Power is appeased and permitted to continue with its flagrant impunity, disrespecting both the rule of law and the sanctity of human life.

We renew our call to the international community, in particular the Security Council, to ensure the protection of the Palestinian people and the safety and well-being of the defenceless civilian population held captive under an occupation spanning more than half a century, and look forward to the report of the Secretary-General and his proposals on ways and means to provide international protection to the Palestinian people, including through an international protection mechanism, pursuant to General Assembly resolution ES-10/20. We reiterate that the Palestinian civilian population under Israel's occupation, including in the Gaza Strip, must be guaranteed protection and cannot remain the exception to the obligations and commitments made to protect civilians in all circumstances from atrocities and flagrant breaches of the law.

We urge all members of the international community and all relevant organizations to intervene immediately and to exhibit the moral and political courage necessary to put an end to Israel's unlawful and immoral behaviour, including the illegal occupation of Palestinian land and the suffocating blockade of Gaza, in blatant violation of the occupying Power's obligations under international law, and to put an end to Israel's long-standing impunity for international crimes.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 643 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 27 July 2018 (A/ES-10/792-S/2018/746), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations